

Message Text

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TAGS: PINT UR

SUBJECT: INTERVIEW: MFA/PRESS CHIEF: FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS

1. SUMMARY. "THAT MOST SURREALIST OF SOVIET MEN" (IN THE WORDS OF THE DEAN OF MOSCOW'S CORRESPONDENTS' CORPS), VSEVOLOD NIKOLAYEVICH SOFINSKIY, HEAD OF THE PRESS SECTION OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AUTHORS THE MOST RECENT ARTICLE IN THE SERIES ON THE USSR'S EXEMPLARY ADHERENCE TO THE CSCE FINAL ACT. WRITING IN "LITERATURNAYA GAZETA" OF FEBRUARY 18 (FULL TEXT BY AIRGRAM) UNDER THE HEADING "FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS IN THE SOVIET UNION," SOFINSKIY PAINTS AN ALL BUT UNRECOGNIZABLE PICTURE OF THE EASE WITH WHICH NEWSPAPERMEN OPERATE IN THE SOVIET UNION AND CRITICIZES IN PERHAPS PREDICTABLE CATEGORIES WESTERN OBSERVANCE OF THE "NORMS" ESTABLISHED BY THE FINAL ACT. RL'S AND RFE'S ACTIVITIES ARE DE-
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SCRIBED AS "CRIMINAL." SECRETARY GENERAL BREZHNEV

IS QUOTED AT HELSINKI SAYING THAT "MEDIA SHOULD NOT SPREAD POISON AROUND THE WORLD."

2. IN HIS ARTICLE, SOFINSKIY SAYS THAT WESTERN CORRESPONDENTS HAVE TRAVELED TO THE FAR CORNERS OF THE SOVIET UNION. MOREOVER, MULTIPLE ENTRY/EXIT VISAS ARE NOW GRANTED CORRESPONDENTS, A MOVE WHICH WAS PRAISED BY THE UK FOREIGN MINISTER, ACCORDING TO SOFINSKIY. OF COURSE, HE SAYS, THE MFA CANNOT GUARANTEE TO "ALL" CORRESPONDENTS HOTEL SPACE, GAS STATIONS OR ADEQUATE ROADS. IN ANY CASE, THERE ARE SO MANY PRESS CONFERENCES, TALKS AND DISCUSSIONS SET UP TO ACCOMMODATE CORRESPONDENTS IN MOSCOW THAT IT IS A RARE ONE WHO WOULD WANT TO GO "TO SIBERIA FOR SEVERAL WEEKS, LEST HE MISS SOMETHING IMPORTANT IN MOSCOW." AND TO SUPPORT HIS VIEW, SOFINSKIY MISQUOTES AND TAKES OUT OF CONTEXT LAST AUGUST'S "NEW YORK TIMES" STORY BY MALCOLM BORWNE WHO SAYS IN FACT THAT A JOURNALIST VISITING MOSCOW IS GIVEN SO FULL A SCHEDULE OF MARGINAL AND TIME CONSUMING MEETINGS THAT HE LITERALLY HAS NO TIME FOR MORE SERIOUS PURPOSES, WHICH ARE IN ANY EVENT DIFFICULT ENOUGH TO ACHIEVE IN MOSCOW.

3. AS FOR THE WEST, SOFINSKIY SAYS, NO "BOURGEOIS PAPER" HAS PRINTED THE FINAL ACT IN FULL, AS HAVE PRAVDA AND IZVESTIA WITH A TOTAL CIRCULATION OF OVER 20,000,000. SOME COUNTRIES LIMIT THE NUMBER OF WORK PERMITS FOR PERMANENTLY RESIDENT SOVIET CITIZENS, INCLUDING JOURNALISTS. VISAS FOR SOVIET JOURNALISTS ARE DELAYED OCCASIONALLY FOR MONTHS BY THE USA, UK AND FRANCE, AND NOT ALWAYS GRANTED. WESTERN CORRESPONDENTS SHOULD REPORT WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF "POLEMICS AND THE IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLE," HEEDING "PROFESSIONAL ETHICS" AND "OBJECTIVELY REFLECT THE TRUTH." INSTEAD, THEY EMPHASIZE "DISSIDENTS" AND "KITCHEN GOSSIP." THE "AMERICAN RADION STATIONS RL AND RFE "SUPPORT THE "HYSTERIC OF THE COLD WAR" THROUGH "CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES CONTRARY TO THE HELSINKI PRINCIPLES OF ELEMENTARY NORMS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW, DETENTE AND GOOD-NEIGHBORLY PEACEFUL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CO-EXISTENCE ..." AND SOFINSKIY QUOTES THE BY NOW WIDELY CITED SECRETARY GENERAL BREZHNEV AT HELSINKI ON THE MEDIA'S TASK IN SERVING PEACE AND NOT "SPREADING POISON AROUND THE WORLD."

4. COMMENT: WESTERN CORRESPONDENTS' COMPLAINTS ABOUT LACK OF ACCESS TO SOVIET SOURCES, TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS AND GENERAL PERVERSION OF FACT IN BRIEFINGS WOULD INDI-

CATE THAT THE PRESS OFFICE OF THE MFA DOES, INDEEVD,
OFFER "VAST OPPORTUNITIES FOR FIRST-HAND AND DEEP
ACQUAINTANCE WITH SOVIET REALITY," TO QUOTE SOFINSKIY,
BUT NOT AS HE INTENDS THE PHRASE. THE CHARACTERIZATION
OF RL AND RFE ACTIVITIES AS "CRIMINAL" CARRIES TO A NEW
LEVEL THE RECENT PRESS CAMPAIGN AGAINST THEM.
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